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Who Identified Bradford's Manuscript?

By John Ward Dean.

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Gov. Bradford's Manuscript History of Plymouth Plantation and its Transmission to our Times. By JUSTIN WINSOR, Corresponding Secretary Massachusetts Historical Society Private Edition, Seventy-Five Copies. Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, University Press. 1881. 8vo. pp. 18.

In the review of this pamphlet in the April number, I omitted to notice Mr. Winsor's reference to the claim that Mr. Barry derived from Mr. Samuel G. Drake the idea that the "MS. History of the Plantation at Plymouth," quoted by Bishop Wilberforce, was Bradford's lost work. As I myself many years ago expressed an opinion that Mr Drake was the first person to show that the quotations were from Bradford's history, I will briefly give my reasons for doing so. I had been informed on authority which I could not doubt, that Mr. Barry called with the book on Mr. Drake, showed him the quotations and asked him what he thought of them. Mr. Drake promptly replied that certain portions, which he pointed out, were the exact words of Bradford as preserved by Morton or Prince, and that other parts were new matter; and he at once said that the manuscript must be either Bradford's history or a work containing quotations from it. Mr. Barry could not be made to say whether he thought Mr. Drake's conjecture a plausible one. All he would say was that there was something new there. This information I had from Messrs. Frederic Kidder and James S Loring, both now living, who were present on the occasion; and also from Mr. Drake himself. I afterwards stated these facts in a communication signed "IOTA," in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, July 17, 1856, which article was reprinted in the REGISTER, vol. x. page 354. Mr. Loring read the article at the time, and assured me that my statements were correct. Mr. Kidder, who in 1856 resided in New York, not long after confirmed my statements, as he has since done. The readiness with which Mr. Drake detected that the quotations were from Bradford, shows his familiarity with early New England writers and his critical sagacity; but his acquaintances need no evidence of this.

I called at Mr. Drake's soon after the occurrence, and Mr. Frederic Kidder, who was there, asked me if I knew that it had been discovered where Bradford's manuscript was. Mr. Drake checked him and said that they were not sure. Well, Mr. Kidder replied, we are almost sure, to which Mr. Drake assented. I was then told about Mr. Barry's bringing the book to Mr. Drake and the opinion given him. The impression I obtained at the time was that Mr. Barry had come directly with the book from Mr. Thornton's office, which was not far distant. To aid in deciding this question, some years after I asked of Mr. Sheppard when Mr. Barry left his and Mr. Thornton's office, and of Mr. Drake when he came to his book-store. Neither remembered the exact hour, but both said it was in the latter part of the forenoon, say between ten and twelve o'clock, probably not far from eleven.

I have recently been furnished with the following extracts from Mr. Drake's diary for the year 1855:

"Feb. 17, John S. Barry called with a vol. he had got of Thornton, which contained extracts from a MS., and requested my opinion. I said it was Gov. Bradford's history, but he would give no opinion."

Mr. Thornton informed me that he loaned the book to Mr. Barry the morning after he bought it, which was on the afternoon of the 14th; consequently the book was loaned on the morning of the 15th. I saw at once, when I read Mr. Drake's entry, that unless his date is wrong, I had been mistaken in the idea that Mr. Barry went directly to Mr. Drake's place of business.

Having a doubt whether there might not be a mistake in the date in Mr. Drake's diary, I applied to Charles Deane, LL.D., the editor of Bradford's History, to see if I could obtain facts from him bearing upon the subject; and subsequently I sent him a proof of this article. He replied as follows:

"You tell me that the late Mr. S. G. Drake has recorded in his diary, the date 'Feb. 17th,' 1855, as the day on which the Rev. J. S. Barry called on him with the volume in which passages from Bradford's lost history were recognized.

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"I send you a copy of a memorandum placed in my hands by Mr. Barry, bearing no date, but evidently handed to me about the time when the subject-matter of it was discussed. It may be regarded substantially as a contemporaneous record. By this I notice that Mr. Barry and Mr. Drake differ by one day, as to the time when Mr. Barry called on Mr. Drake with the volume by means of which the identification was made. Mr. Barry says it was 'on Friday morning,' which was the 16th. It appears also by his memorandum, that he had on the preceding day, about five o'clock in the afternoon, called on Mr. Drake, and announced to him the discovery, as he had also in the evening of that day announced it to Dr. Shurtleff, but without having, as I infer, in either instance, the volume with him—the examination of the volume itself taking place at separate interviews with both these gentlemen on the 16th. Mr. Drake appears to have made no record in his diary of Mr. Barry's first call in the afternoon of Thursday the 15th."

Mr. Barry's Memorandum.

"Thursday Feb. 14 [15th], about 11 o'clock, called at J. W. T.'s, and Mr. Sheppard gave me the package left by Mr. T. Read the book at noon, and then made the discovery. Went to Thornton's after dinner, but he not in. Called at Drake's on the way home about 5, and named it to him. Saw Dr. S.[hurtleff] in the evening, at a party, and announced to him. Saw Drake on Friday morning, and showed him the book. Called at T.'s, but he not in. Went to Dr. S. and satisfied him. Called again at T.'s, not in. Then on C. D., &c. [This last call was on the 17th. In noting this call I suppose Mr. Barry did not think it necessary to inform me of its date.—C. D.]"

I omitted in my former notice to give the authority on which I there stated that the book was marked as represented in the fac-simile when Mr. Barry borrowed it. Before Mr. Thornton's death he placed the book itself in the custody of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and when he put it into my hands he assured me that all the marks on the pages relating to the Fullham manuscript were made by him before he loaned the book to Mr. Barry.

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